

A

5

CRITICAL DISSERTATION

ON

Page 77

2 PETER i. 16-----21.

IN WHICH

The FORCE of the APOSTLE'S
REASONING is shewn,

AND THE

CONNEXION of the WHOLE PASSAGE
explained.

*Lib. N. 7.
R. Peter. 167*



L O N D O N:

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M DCC LI.

ERRATA.

- P**AGE 4. l. 5. of verse 18. for *ἀγίω*, read *ἀγίω*. L. 4. of verse 21. for *old*, read *God*. last line but 4. after *says*, dele *of it*.
- Page 6. l. 15. After *intended*, begin a new paragraph.
- Page 8. l. 29. Dele the comma after *whereas*. l. penult. for *promise of coming*, read *promise of his coming*.
- Page 9. l. 24. After *nigh*, for a comma put a semicolon.
- Page 11. l. 6. For *as even to ask*, read *as to ask*. l. 26. for *αἰώνων*, read *αἰῶνων*.
- Page 12. l. 8. For *enforce*, read *inforce*. l. 15, 16 and 17. read, *I say that, as what is said verse the third, is plainly brought to give weight to the two verses preceding it, it would, &c.* l. 21. after *but*, dele *that*.
- Page 14. l. 8. Dele [*the scbechina*], l. 19 and 20. for *contraction*, read *contradiction*.
- Page 16. l. 14. For *or rather in the future perfect*, read *or in the future perfect tense*.
- Page 17. l. 11. For *indisposition*, read *in a disposition*. l. 13. *save them*, should be in Italics. l. 27. for *ἐξοδov*, read *ἐξόδov*.
- Page 18. l. 4. After *Israel*, for a comma put a semicolon. l. 17. for *ἐναντῷ*, read *ἐναντῷ*.
- Page 21. l. 28. Dele the comma after *than*.
- Page 24. l. penult. For *φωσφόρος*, read *φωσφόρος*.
- Page 26. l. 5. Read *no prophecy of the scripture*.
- Page 30. l. ult. For *believed*, read *heard*. In the note l. 2 and 3. For *solutione deducitus, cum expositio*, read *solutione deducitur, cum expositio*.
- Page 31. l. 2. For *yet he knew*, read *yet knew*. l. 3. for *the prophecy*, read *it*.
- Page 32. l. 12. For *preceeding*, read *preceding*. Page 33. l. 5. of the note, for *profitable*, read *profitable*.
- Page 34. l. 5. After *pleased*, for a comma put a semicolon.



A

Critical Dissertation

O N

2 PETER i. 16-----21.

16. Οὐ γὰρ σεσο-
φισμένοις μύθοις ἐξακο-
λουθήσαντες ἐνωρίσαμεν
ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ
παρουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἐπόπλαι
γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου με-
γαλειότητος.

17. Λαβὼν γὰρ παρὰ
Θεοῦ πατρὸς τιμὴν καὶ δό-
ξαν, φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης
αὐτῷ τοιαῦδε ὑπὸ τῆς
μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης·
δοῦλος ἐστίν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ
ἀγαπητός, εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐ-
δόκησα.

For we have not
followed cunningly de-
vised fables, when we
made known unto you
the power and coming
of our Lord Jesus
Christ, but were eye-
witnesses of his majesty.

For he received
from God the Father
honour and glory,
when there came such
a voice to him from
the excellent glory,
This is my beloved
Son, in whom I am
well pleased.

B

18. Καὶ

18. Καὶ ταύτην τὴν
Φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐξ
οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθεῖσαν, σὺν
αὐτῷ ὄντες ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῷ
ἁγίῳ.

19. Καὶ ἔχομεν βε-
βαιότερον τὸν προφητι-
κὸν λόγον, ᾧ καλῶς ποι-
εῖτε προσέχοντες, ὡς
λύχνῳ φαίνοντι ἐν αὐχ-
μηρῷ τόπῳ, ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα
διαυγάσῃ, καὶ Φωσφόρος
ἀνατείλῃ ἐν ταῖς καρ-
δίαις ὑμῶν.

20. Τοῦτο πρῶτον
γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶσα
προφητεία γραφῆς, ἰδίας
ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεσθαι.

21. Οὐ γὰρ θελήμα-
τι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη ποτὲ
προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ
πνεύματος ἁγίου φερό-
μενοι ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἅγιοι
Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.

And this voice which
came from heaven we
heard, when we were
with him in the holy
mount.

We have also a more
sure word of prophecy ;
whereunto ye do well
that ye take heed, as
unto a light that shin-
eth in a dark place,
until the day dawn,
and the day-star arise
in your hearts.

Knowing this first,
that no prophecy of
the scripture is of any
private interpretation :

For the prophecy
came not in old time
by the will of man ;
but holy men of ~~God~~
spake as they were
moved by the Holy
Ghost.

THIS epistle, by what St. PETER
himself says ~~of it~~, ch. i. 14. *Knowing
that shortly I must put off this my taber-
nacle*, was written but a very little time before
his death ; which happened under the emperor
Nero, towards the end of his reign, about the
year

year of Christ 67, two or three years before Jerusalem was invested by Titus, and twenty five years according to the *Romanists*, (which opinion also Dr. *Hammond* follows,) thirteen according to Mr. *Dodwell*, and only five or six according to Dr. *Wells* and Dr. *Whitby*, after penning his first epistle. It was written, as we learn from ch. iii. 1. to the very same persons, to whom the first had been directed, *i. e.* to the converted Jews of the dispersion, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, &c. (1 Pet. i. 1.); and one occasion of it, nay, and a principal one, was to warn them against scoffers, on account of Christ's not being then come, (ch. iii. 1-----10.) and to vindicate himself, and some other of the apostles, from the charge of falshood and imposture, in what they had taught and delivered concerning that important event: *For*, says he, ch. i. 16. *we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming, or the powerful coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* When St. Peter says, ἐγγυπισαμεν, *we made known*, in a preter tense, he necessarily refers us to something he had said before upon the same subject in his former epistle; and whereas it is in the plural number, (contrary to his manner of expression, when he speaks of himself only, as is evident from ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, of this very chapter) hence by, *we*, he must be supposed to

include what some of the other apostles of our Lord had delivered and foretold concerning the *coming of Christ*, (the subject in question) as well as himself. The places referred to in his former epistle, amongst others, seem to be ch. iv. 7. Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικε, *But the end of all things is at hand*; and ver. 17. *The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end (τὸ τέλος) be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* Now if we consider the nature of these expressions, and compare them with some parallel places, we shall soon learn, what coming of Christ the apostle here principally intended. *The end of all things is at hand*, says he, (1 Pet. iv. 7.). 'Tis observed by commentators, that πάντα is not always to be taken universally, but sometimes to be limited by the subject-matter; as where St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, 1 Epist. x. 23. πάντα μοι ἔξεσιν, *All things are lawful for me*; not *all* things indiscriminately, but only the things he is there speaking of; all meats might be lawfully eaten by him: and Mark iv. 34. *He expounded all things to his disciples*, i. e. ALL he had been teaching before in parables: and so πάντων τὸ τέλος, does not necessarily mean the end of the world, but may signify only the end of the Jewish state, which is emphatically called by our Saviour, Mark xiii. 7. τὸ τέλος, *the END shall not be yet*, speaking to some of his disciples, who had asked him, when

when the things should be, mentioned ver. 2. *of there not being left one stone upon another of the buildings of the temple that should not be thrown down.* And that this was actually the event, which St. Peter had in his eye, or at least first and principally, and not the final dissolution of all things, is evident from what he affirms of it; *the end of all things* (ἡ γγικε) *is at hand.* 'Tis remarked of the word ἐγγίζω*, that it signifies, both so to approach, that you are yet at some distance, though not very far off, as Matt. xxi. 1. καὶ ὅτε ἡγγισαν εἰς τὸ ἱεροσόλυμα, &c. *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage unto the mount of Olives:* and it also signifies, so to approach, as to be in a manner there, or at the place, as Luke xii. 33. *Where no thief approaches* (ἐγγίζει); and if spoken of time, and in the preter tense, to be just at hand, if not come, as Matt. xxvi. 45. *Behold the hour is at hand* (ἡγγικεν ἡ ὥρα, &c.) *and the Son of man is betrayed.* Most certainly the phrase cannot be used of an event at any very great distance; wherefore our Saviour, in his prediction of what should befall Jerusalem, Luke xxi.

* Εγγίζειν duo significat; primo, sic appropinquare, ut adhuc absis, & sis non procul, ut Matt. xxi. 1. secundo, sic appropinquare, ut coram adsis, & attingas, ut Luc. xii. 33. hinc passim pro accedere & advenire usurpatur in evangelio; — præsertim vero in præterito ἡγγικε significat jam advenisse, & adeste.

20, &c. and which accordingly happened about thirty seven years after his death, never says of it himself, ἐγγίξει or ἤγγικε, it approaches, or is at hand; but only fixes some remarkable prognostics, by which, when these should happen, it might then be known to be at hand; particularly, the besieging of Jerusalem; *When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know, the desolation thereof is nigh*, (ἤγγικεν): parallel to which is Matt. xxiv. 33. *When ye shall see all these things, know, that it is near*, (ἐγγύς ἐστί) or, he is near, even at the doors. On the contrary, having entered upon his public ministry, and begun to preach, he says, Matt. iv. 17. ἤγγικε, &c. the kingdom of heaven, or the gospel dispensation, is at hand.

There are yet some other circumstances, which seem to determine the coming of Christ, in the text, to the vengeance he had threatened to execute on the Jewish nation; as that it is stiled, ch. ii. 1. ταχυνὴν ἀπώλειαν, *swift, or speedy destruction*; that the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ here, is almost a parallel expression to the Son of man coming — with power, in St. Matt. xxiv. 30. where he is unquestionably speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, see the 15th and following verses; and lastly, that whereas, St. Peter mentions, ch. ii. 1. false teachers, and ch. iii. 4. scoffers, saying, where is the promise of ^{his} coming? and ch. ii. 9. a notable discrimination that was to be

be made between the godly and the unrighteous, the believing and unbelieving Jews, *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly, &c.* Hence it can hardly be questioned, but he had in view those several expressions of our Saviour relating to the destruction of the Jews, Matt. xxiv. 24. *There shall arise false Christs and false prophets;* and Matt. xxiv. 40. *Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left;* and Luke xviii. 8. *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?* The point of doctrine then, here to be vindicated, was, as I apprehend, the coming of Christ in power to take vengeance on the unbelieving Jews; and which he had intimated in his former epistle was near upon being accomplished, *The end of all things is at hand*, ch. iv. 7. And to the like effect St. James had spoken, who wrote his epistle much about the same time, if not the very same year, in which St. Peter penned his former one. He likewise, to comfort the persecuted Christians, tells them, ch. v. 8. *ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἡγγισκε*, *the coming of the Lord draws nigh*; and ver. 9, *The judge stands before the door*; which certainly denotes an event very near at hand. And St. Paul, before either of them, tells the Thessalonians 1 Epistle ii. 14, 15, 16. that they also had suffered like things of their own countrymen, as the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus, had of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have
per-

persecuted us, viz. his apostles——forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost: in the latter part of which passage, ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας, &c. to fill up their sins always, &c. St. Paul evidently has his eye upon that of our Saviour, Matt. xxiii. 32—36. καὶ ὑμεῖς πληρῶσαίτε, &c. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers---- behold I send you prophets---- and some of them shall ye kill and crucify---- that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel----- verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. This prediction, St. Paul tells the Thessalonians, the Jews had then fulfilled; and by fulfilling it, had filled up the measure of their sins; so that they were ripe for vengeance, and the time was in a manner come, and within a very little while the wrath of God would most certainly overtake them, to destroy their church and nation εἰς τέλος to the uttermost, 'till there was an end of them, or 'till they were consumed, as the phrase often imports. Thus we see, it was an argument very frequently used by the apostles to comfort the afflicted Christians under their pressures and troubles, (in which the Jews had a principal hand, and which they every where fomented against them) that a very signal vengeance and destruction awaited that people, and would very speedily overtake them.

But

But then, as this had been their language for some time ; and as upon the lowest computation there were five or six years gone since St. *Peter* wrote his first epistle, and the end not yet come : hence the faith of many waxed cold ; and some went so far, as ~~even~~ to ask in derision, ch. iii. 4. *Saying, where is the promise of his coming ?* and to treat the whole, as *cunningly devised fables*, mere amusements to keep up the fainting spirits of the poor persecuted Christians. At first sight, indeed, the passage now referred to in the 3d chapter should seem to respect a time subsequent to the apostle's age ; for it is expressed in the future tense, as something that should happen in the last days, ver. 3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers.* But this objection soon vanishes, if you consider,

First, That the apostle, in his reply to it, treats it as made then, and answers it in the present tense, *for this they are willingly ignorant of*, &c. ver. 5.

Secondly, That the phrase ἐπ' ἐσχάτῃ τῶν ἡμερῶν, *in the last days*, (equivalent to which is, αἰὼν μέλλων, *the world, or age, to come*, Heb. vi. 5. and τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων, *the ends of the world, or last of the ages*, 1 Cor. x. 11.) is applicable to the whole gospel dispensation, and might as truly be spoken of the time in which St. *Peter* lived, as of any subsequent time of

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the

the gospel-æconomy; and accordingly St. *Paul*, who is supposed to have writ his epistle to the *Hebrews*, A. D. 63. particularly applies it to his own times, calling them, ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν τέτων, *in these last days*, ch. i. 1.

Thirdly, That, as what is said ver. 3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, &c.* is brought to enforce what St. *Peter* had declared, ver. 1, 2. to be the general design of his writing this epistle, viz. *To stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, that they might be mindful of the words, which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*; I say, as what is said, the third is plainly brought to give weight to the second verse preceding it, that it would go but a little way towards answering this purpose to tell them, that in after-times, perhaps many ages to come, *scoffers should arise, &c.* but that it might have a very good effect, to apprize them, that even then they were expected, and were actually come, and, consequently, ought to be guarded against. And therefore,

Fourthly, That the future time here mentioned, was chiefly and principally in reference to what had been before taught, both by the prophets of old, and by Christ and his apostles, (*Habak. i. 5. Matt. xxiv. 12. 2 Theff. ii. 3.*)
of

of scoffers that should come, and of a defection or falling away; and who, according to these predictions, as *St. Peter* reminds those he writes to, were now come; and, as is plainly intimated, ch. iii. 17. had *led away* some by their wicked *errors*, and occasioned them *to fall from their stedfastness*. And in like manner we must interpret what is said, ch. ii. 1. *There shall be false teachers among you*, as future, only with respect to what had been foretold; or, at least, as taking in the then present times of Christianity, as well as the future: for of these very persons it is said, ver. 1. in the present tense, that they *bring upon themselves swift destruction*; and ver. 3. that *their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*. And the reason I have taken notice of this so particularly, is, that hereby we are still farther convinced of the main drift of this epistle: which was to caution the faithful against scoffers, that were then already come, as had been foretold; and had made the coming of Christ, and what the apostles had delivered upon that head, a principal subject of their raillery.

Let us next see how *St. Peter* vindicates himself from the scoffs of these men, who treated, *as cunningly devised fables*, what he and some other of the apostles had taught of the coming of Christ, in a judicial capacity; not only to judge the world in the last day, but also to punish the impenitent *Jews* now in

a short time. In the first place, he denies, that these were any devices of theirs, or any stratagems to deceive, when *they made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*; for that he, and some other of the apostles, *were eye-witnesses of his Majesty* *, *when they were with him in the holy mount* †, and saw ~~[the shechina]~~, the shining cloud, or *excellent glory* ‡, the symbol of the divine presence; and also heard the voice that came from it, bearing a most satisfactory attestation, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Commentators are generally agreed, that this passage alludes to our Saviour's transfiguration on a mountain in *Galilee*, at which *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, were present.

Grotius indeed, for a very evident reason (because he denies *St. Peter* to have been the author of this epistle) is forced, in contradiction to his better judgment, as delivered in his annotations on the history of the transfiguration, *Matt. xvii.* to refer it to *John xii. 28.* when, in answer to our Saviour's petition, *Father, glorify thy name*; *there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* This he supposes to be spoken in the temple, which standing on mount *Moriah*, might be the *holy mount* referred to in the text; and farther, that it was in the hearing of *Simeon* or *Simon*, after-

* Ver. 16.

† Ver. 18.

‡ Ver. 17.

wards bishop of *Jerusalem*, and successor of *James* the brother of our Lord. But supposing these words were spoken in the temple, which does not certainly appear; yet there is not the least shadow of reason to say, that *Simeon* was then present; neither is there any mention in *St. John* of a magnificent glory or majesty, of which the standers-by were eye-witnesses; nor are the words themselves the same, as those said to be heard in this epistle. Whereas every circumstance of the account here agrees with the story of the transfiguration; the words spoken upon the occasion are the very same; notice is taken in both places of a shining cloud or visible glory; in both the scene of action is a mountain; and what is most considerable of all, as shall be shewn presently, the topic of conversation both here and there, was the *power and coming of Christ*: from all which we may fairly collect, and indeed it affords a very good internal proof, that the writer of this epistle was one of the three disciples that Christ took up into the mount with him at his transfiguration; and that *St. Peter* here is endeavouring to prove his point by what himself and the other two saw and heard upon that occasion. But here it is natural to ask, wherein does the strength of *St. Peter's* evidence consist? He would prove, he had *not followed cunningly devised fables, when he made known the power and coming of Christ*, because he was *an eye-witness of his majesty and glory*

on the mount, and heard a voice there attesting him to be the *beloved Son of God*. Now a person might have seen and heard all that was transacted there, and yet not have had a competent authority to declare a particular future event, as this of the *coming of Christ* was. Let us see then in what manner these two things are to be connected. 'Tis very remarkable, that each of the three accounts of Christ's transfiguration, as given by St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, are prefaced with our Lord's saying; *Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste death, till they see*, or rather in the future-perfect, till they shall have seen, *the Son of man coming in his kingdom*, Matt. xvi. 28; or, according to St. *Mark* ix. 1. *Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power*; or, as St. *Luke* varies it, ch. ix. 27. *Till they see the kingdom of God*; which words, though they seem to have had their fullest completion in the apostle St. *John*, who survived the destruction of *Jerusalem* many years; yet in all the three places, being expressed in the plural number, I cannot but think, that in a certain sense, and in part, they were also fulfilled in the other two disciples, in what they saw and heard upon the mount: *the honour and glory*, which Christ there received from God the Father, when *his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white and glistering*, being probably intended to give the disciples a kind of image and representation of his future

future glorious kingdom, in which he was then instated, as in a vision ; and which, as it was soon to take place, and actually did commence at his resurrection ; so this faint glimpse and adumbration of it was a kind of prophetic assurance and confirmation, to the persons present with our Lord at that time, of the things he had told them a few days before, of his being shortly to come, even in the life-time of some of the standers-by, to make a signal difference between such as were willing, or in disposition *to lose their lives for his sake* ; and such, as at all hazards would save them, (for this also is a part of the context in all the Evangelists) ; which as it was one instance of his judicial authority, or, *of the kingdom of God coming with power* ; so was it remarkably fulfilled at the siege and taking of *Jerusalem*. And this argument, *viz.* of its being one design of the transfiguration to give the disciples a hint of Christ's kingdom of power, that was shortly to come ; and in which he was then instated, as in a figure ; still receives an additional strength, if we consider, that the subject of discourse betwixt Christ, and *Moses*, and *Elias*, upon the mount, probably turned upon this very point. St. *Luke* says, ch. ix. 31. Ἐλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτῶν, *they spake of his decease*, of his Exodus, or departure. The word ἔξοδος, though it be acknowledged sometimes to import no more than an exit or death, as 2 *Pet.* i. 15. μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον, *after my decease* ; yet it is as true, that it is also some-

sometimes used with a greater latitude, as *Heb. xi. 22.* By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention *περὶ τῆς ἐξόδου, &c.* of the departing of the children of Israel, and accordingly, this word gives title to a book of scripture; and *Grotius* is of opinion, that in the place now under consideration, it has an allusion to the Exodus or departure of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*; which was a complicated event, and does not barely signify their departure from thence, but includes in it some of the most remarkable circumstances which attended it, particularly the destruction of the *Egyptians*, and deliverance of God's people: analogous to which the Exodus or departure of Christ, which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*, (and which, as I shall shew presently, was the business discoursed between Christ, and *Moses*, and *Elias*,) may very well be supposed to take in, not merely the single event of the crucifixion there; but the several branches and consequences of it, of which *Jerusalem* was to be the scene, as well as of his death. And what will farther warrant us in using the word with such a latitude, is, that it is so used, *Exod. xxiii. 16.* where *the end of the year* is stiled by the seventy *ἔξοδος ἐνιαυτῶν*, not a particular day, but a continuation of time, or a season.

To elucidate this matter still farther; compare what is here intimated in a single word, with what is more plainly implied in that question of the disciples to their master, *Matt. xvii.*

10. as they came down from the mountain, *Why then say the scribes, that Elias must first come?* which, that it was not an impertinent question, or that the scribes did not say it without good grounds, is plain by the satisfaction Christ was pleased to give it in the two following verses: *Elias truly shall first come ——— but I say unto you that Elias is come already.* But *first* come before what? why, to be sure, before some remarkable period or other; which, from their manner of putting the question, they seem convinced was now approaching, but only they could not reconcile the nearness of it with *Elias* (as they apprehended) not being yet come. Now the period, before which it was asserted by the scribes, upon the authority of the Old Testament, *That Elias must first come*, was the great and dreadful day of the Lord, mentioned by the prophet *Malachi* ch. iv. 5. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord:* and as our Saviour has interpreted this *Elijah* to be *John* the Baptist, *Matt.* xvii. 13. called *Elijah* or *Elias*, because he came in the spirit and power of *Elias*, *Luke* i. 17. and resembled him in his offices; hence this necessarily determines the great event he was to precede, to be, not the coming of the Lord at the last day, but only his coming to execute judgment on the Jewish nation; which, because it was an eminent type of the former, and very ter-

rible in its kind, is therefore frequently, in the figurative stile of the prophets, conceived in words that denote the general dissolution of all things: though as to the place in *Malachi*, the three first verses of the chapter, *For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble — But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings — and ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet ; —* these words evidently shew, that only a particular judgment was here intended, which should come upon the unbelieving *Jews*; whilst the faithful and upright should escape that desolation: which was most extraordinarily verified, when, upon the taking of the city and temple of *Jerusalem* by the *Roman* army under *Titus*, the Christian *Jews* (being alarmed and forewarned by a former siege, which was on a sudden raised, as it should seem, by a special act of Providence, without any visible cause) took that opportunity of fleeing out of *Jerusalem*; so that when *Titus* came some months after and besieged the city, there were no Christians remaining in it. See *Euseb. Eccl. hist. lib. 3. c. 5.*

For certain then, this first coming of the Lord, with the effects and consequences of it, was the period intended by the disciples, before which they thought *Elias* was to come; and nothing but the supposition of this being the

the subject of discourse upon the mount could account for, or give rise to their question, as they came down from it, *Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?* And by this time, I think, it appears pretty plain, why St. Peter alledges in the text, the *glory and majesty* of Christ, which he saw upon the mount, as a proof of his *power and coming*, that was shortly to commence, in which he would exercise his kingly authority in the destruction of his enemies and deliverance of his faithful servants; the reason, I say, he alledges it upon this occasion, is, because it was *That*, by which he was able to make known with certainty *the power and coming of Christ* to them; as having had a particular revelation of it, having by way of vision seen Christ solemnly instated in his kingdom of glory, having been a witness to the conversation held upon the mountain about this very point, and heard the whole in a most awful manner confirmed by a voice from heaven, declaring Jesus to be the Son of God, and injoining the disciples to hearken to him, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*, Matt. xvii. 5.

But then, as this evidence of the apostle, at the time of his writing this epistle, was no other ways convincing, than, as those whom he wrote to were persuaded of his veracity; (for the event was yet unaccomplished; which because it had been declared by this very apostle some time ago to be near at hand, but was not

yet come ; hence, as I observed above, many grew very impatient, and were in danger of *falling from their steadfastness*, (2 Pet. iii. 17.) and some even proceeded so far as to scoff at this doctrine, and to rank it among *cunningly devised fables* for the support of the gospel ;) wherefore, to corroborate his own testimony, he calls in the aid of prophecy ; which he knew would be readily acknowledged by all *Jews* in general : καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, says he, ver. 19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy.* The prophecies alluded to are probably those of *Malachi* above cited ; and that of *Joel* ii. 1. *Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand ;* and to be sure that of the prophet *Daniel*, ch. ix. 27. applied by our blessed Saviour to this very occasion ; *he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, or, as the margin reads it, with the abominable armies, he shall make it desolate even until the consummation.* But why does the apostle say, *we have, βεβαιότερον, a more sure word ?* Can any thing be surer than the evidence of miracles ? Can any proof be stronger, than to have the demonstration of our eyes and ears to ascertain what we say ? Some taking the comparison in this light, and being sensible of the inconvenience that would follow from setting the evidence of miracles and prophecy in opposition to one another ; have thought it best to give up

up the comparison, and to consider the manner of expression, only as a strong way of affirming; as if he had said, *We have also a very sure word of prophecy*: and if there was occasion for it, we might do so; nothing being more common than to put one degree of comparison for another. Thus it is said of the *Athenians*, Acts xvii. 21. *That they spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some NEW thing* (καινότερον): and when St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. *Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the GREATEST of these is charity*; the original is only μέγιστον, in the comparative. But there is no need of any such change of degree of comparison here; for it is not the apostle's meaning, nor is it the way of the inspired writers to set one sort of evidence against another: miracles and prophecy are two distinct proofs; both of them demonstrative in some circumstances; and as far as they are so, neither of them surer, or stronger than the other. But St. Peter's whole design was to vindicate himself and the other disciples from the charge of undue artifice, in what they had advanced about the coming of Christ; for which purpose he, as it were, tells those whom he addresses himself to, "If our own testimony is
 " not thought sufficient by you; if you doubt
 " and call in question the authority of us, the
 " apostles of Christ; we have yet something
 " farther to offer, which we think you can-
 " not object to: you have also the testimony
 " of

“ of your own prophets for the certainty of the
 “ event now in question, which testimony,
 “ we know, carries the highest weight and
 “ authority with you; we have this on our
 “ side to give a concurrent testimony with our
 “ own.” So that the comparison lies between
 the word and testimony of *St. Peter*; which,
 however unreasonably, was yet suspected by
 some; and the word and testimony of pro-
 phesy, which was held authentic by all. *Gro-
 tius* gives another turn to this expression, as if
 it were to be rendered thus, *We have also the
 word of prophecy surer*, making the comparison
 to lie between the different states of prophecy;
 between prophecy unaccomplished, and the
 the same afterwards compleated: his words are,
*Sermo prophetarum habuit quidem semper apud
 nos auctoritatem: at nunc multò majorem habet,
 ex quo videmus eventus tam pulchre congruere
 dictis de Messia.* But this interpretation pro-
 ceeds upon a supposition, that *St. Peter* was
 not the author of this epistle; and that it was
 written after the subversion of the Jewish state;
 when the power and coming of Christ, as to
 that particular event, had been manifested:
 which is contrary to the tenor of the whole
 epistle, as well as to the words that imme-
 diately follow, *Whereunto ye do well that ye take
 heed, as unto a light*, (λύχνω,) the word pro-
 perly signifies a candle, and ought to be trans-
 lated so here, it standing in opposition to ἡμέρα
 and φωσφόρος, the day, and the day-star; *Unto
 a light that shineth in a dark place, until the
 day*

day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. Now whosoever was the author of this epistle, he could never call a prophecy compleated, (as *Grotius* supposes this now to be) a light, or candle, shining in a dark place ; it would rather, to carry on the metaphor, be the dawning of the day, or the day-star itself.

But to proceed ; *St. Peter*, having given this character of prophecy before its accomplishment, that it was but an obscure light, like that of a candle, which does not quite dispel darkness from the place it shines in ; had good reason to press it so strongly, as he does, upon those whom he writes to, that they *would do well to take heed*, or attend to it : for the obscurer things are, the more care and attention they require, the more pains we must take to find out what their drift is, that we be not misled by them. But as if he did not think even this sufficient to excite and whet their attention ; or lest his countrymen should object, that they could not see clearly, and at first view, the force of any prophecies of the Old Testament to evince that particular event then under consideration, *viz. the power and coming of Christ* ; that therefore they might not expect more from prophecy unfulfilled, than was ever intended by it ; nor imagine the sense and meaning even of what, for the present, was intended by it, to be always so obvious, *that he that ran, could read it* ; for this reason he lays it down, as a rule of prime consequence,

ver. 20. *Knowing this first*, and which ought always to be kept in mind, when we set about to examine the prophetic writings, ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως ἔ γίνεται ; *that no prophecy scripture is of any private interpretation.* So our version renders it ; though, I am afraid, this explication will hardly bear, or connect well, either with what goes before or follows ; the want of duly considering which connexion, is, I apprehend, the cause of so many various expositions which have been given of this passage, and so few of them satisfactory. As to our translation, *that no prophecy, &c. is of any private interpretation ;* as, ἰδιος, *private,* must then stand in opposition to, δημόσιος, *public ;* so the meaning must be, that no one ought to interpret scripture-prophecies according to his own private opinion and judgment, but should submit to the more solemn and public determinations of the church. But meddling, as little as possible, with this controversy here, I would only observe,

First. That this doctrine is not true in fact ; there being many instances in scripture of the use of private judgment in the application of prophecies ; it was for this the *Bereans* are so honourably mentioned, *Acts* xvii. 11. and when our Saviour bade the *Jews*, *John* v. 39. *Search the scriptures*, he certainly supposed it was the duty of every one that heard him, and was capable of it, to do it ; but why should they search them, if, after all, it was not allowed them to judge for themselves.

Secondly.

Secondly. It is matter of question, if the adjective, ἴδιος, be ever used throughout the whole New Testament, in contradistinction to δημόσιος, and consequently, whether it ever signifies, private; when used adverbially indeed it does, as *Matt. xvii. 19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart* (κατ' ἰδίαν;) but as an adjective, it has the signification of the reciprocal pronoun *suus, sui*, as *John i. 11. He came to his own*, εἰς τὰ ἴδια, and *his own*, οἱ ἴδιοι, *received him not*; and *1 Pet. iii. 1. Wives be in subjection to your own husbands*, (ιδίως ἀνδράσιν.) So that its opposite seems to be ἀλλότριος, *alienus*, another's.

But thirdly. Admitting the phrase would bear to be rendered, *not of any private interpretation*; so far is this from being a reason or motive to enforce our *taking heed* and being more attentive to prophecy, that it is really the contrary; for we should have less occasion to attend to it ourselves, if it were publicly and authentically interpreted for us. Nor will it connect better with what comes after, ver. 21. for it matters nothing, as to the original of prophecy, whether it be of private or public interpretation; and yet St. Peter gives this as the reason, why prophecy is not ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως, *because it came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Others, among whom are *Grotius* and *Heinsius*, have thought it would contribute to the clearing up of this passage, if there was an alteration

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in the reading ; and if, instead of ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως, we read ἰδίας ἐπηλεύσεως, * from ἐπέρχεσθαι, *supervenire, invadere*, to come upon, to invade ; as if the meaning was, that no prophecy of scripture was *proprii instinctus*, says *Heinsius* ; *proprii impetus*, says *Grotius* ; i. e. of its own instinct or impulse, what a man's own heart, or thoughts, or imagination, could suggest to him. But neither will this satisfy our inquiry. To observe, that the word ἐπήλευσις never occurs in the New Testament or Septuagint, may be thought too trivial ; but it is certainly of some moment to know, that this reading is not countenanced by any copy or MS. whatever. Not that this is all the exception we have to it ; for in the first place, it deserves a consideration, whether to say any thing is, ἰδίας ἐπηλεύσεως, be not a contradiction in terms : for that which is adventitious or super-induced, as the word ἐπέρχομαι imports ; that which, as *Scapula* says, *violentiæ significationem inclusam habet*, has violence or power included in the notion of it ; and is seldom used in the New Testament, but where it denotes a great power or extraordinary gift, as *Luke* i. 35. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (ἐπελεύσεται) and xi. 22. *But when a stronger than he shall come*, ἐπελθών ; THAT in the nature of it must be ἄλλότριος or another's, and can never be applied to the thing it comes upon, as ἰδίος, or its own. Secondly. If ἐπήλευσις be

* *Heinsius* reads ἐπελύσεως with an, ε, still deriving it from the same verb.

the right reading, it would be hard to assign a reason, why the apostle should lay so much stress upon, and usher in so emphatically, *knowing this first*, what the very nature of the thing he was discoursing of supposed, that prophecy was not of its own instinct or suggestion. Could any Jew want to be informed of this? or could he possibly entertain any other notion of prophecy, than that it was, Θεόπνευστος, divinely inspired, or *by inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. Besides, as what we read in the 21st verse, is intended as a proof of what is laid down in the verse preceding it; if that preceding verse had treated of the original of prophecy, as ἐπήλευσις, supposes it does; what would the proof in the 21st verse amount to, but only a repetition, both negatively and positively, of the very same thing that had been affirmed before. Retaining then the common reading, let us see what the true meaning of this text probably may be; *No prophecy of the scripture is ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως*. The word ἰδιος has already been explained, and shewn to stand in opposition in this place, not to δημόσιος, public, but to ἀλλότριος, another's; and therefore it must be rendered, OWN.

Ἐπίλυσις comes from ἐπιλύειν, *solvere, explicare, interpretari*, to loose, to unriddle, to explain; and is particularly applicable to things intricate and that carry a difficulty in them; hence Joseph is said, Gen. xli. 12. *To each man according to his dream he did interpret*, (ἐπέλυσε)

and St. Mark says, ch. iv. 34. *But without a parable spake he not unto them, and when they were alone, he EXPOUNDED all things to his disciples, (ἐπέλυε.)* Analogous to this, Ἐπίλυσις * must signify, *explicatio, solutio, interpretatio*, the unravelling, explaining, or solution of any difficulty; a word highly proper for the subject in hand, *viz.* prophecy unaccomplished; which is for the most part obscure, and especially the predictions relating to gospel-events: I say, for the most part, because there is no occasion to take *πᾶσα προφητεία* in the largest sense; it may very well be restrained by the nature of the thing here spoken of; or the verse might be rendered, *every prophecy of scripture is not of its own interpretation*; which is allowing that some are; (as indeed some things predicted are so plain and intelligible, that we know precisely beforehand, whenever they shall be compleated, what it is we expect from them; for instance, when during a siege and time of great scarcity in *Samaria*, the prophet *Elisha* foretold, 2 Kings vii. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, to morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flower be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria*; every one that believed this prophecy,

* Ut apud Latinos verbum *Explicandi a plicarum evolutione*; ita apud Græcos Ἐπίλυσις *a vinculorum solutione deducitur*; cum *expositio* sit velut nodi alicujus solutio. GERH. in loc.

although

although he did not know the manner in which it would be accomplished, yet he knew exactly the contents of the prophecy, and what must be done, to reckon it duly compleated.) But though some are thus easy and intelligible, others are not: of which latter sort are those relating to the coming of Christ; which being delivered at a great distance of time from the event, and often having a double sense, (as *the abomination of desolation*, spoken of by the prophet *Daniel*, and applied by our Saviour, *Matt. xxiv. 15.* to the destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Roman* armies, is thought primarily to belong to times nearer the prophet's own; and to have been fulfilled in part by *Antiochus Epiphanes*; see *Dan. viii. 11, 12, 13.* and *1 Maccab. i. 44—64.*); hence I say it comes, that such prophecies as these are involved in obscurity, and are by no means *ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως*, of their own explication or interpretation: they can only be fully cleared up by the event; and though they may afford some light, even before their ultimate completion, yet it is only to those that *take heed to it*, that search and examine the scriptures of the prophets, what their drift and meaning is: but the ignorant, or unattentive may easily overlook their intention, and not discover that degree of conviction they are capable of, and were designed to give; and instead of having their faith strengthened by them, their hopes raised, their fears duly alarm-

alarmed, and their curiosity excited, may turn them into occasions of scoffing and ridicule ; which was the very case of some of those with whom St. *Peter* had to do ; and in this sense we must take that of *Daniel*, ch. xii. 10. *None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.* What still adds weight to the explanation of ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως, as given above, is, that it makes the connexion very clear between this verse and the former ; this latter being brought as it were in aid, more strongly to enforce the caution given in the verse preceeding it, that they would *do well to take heed unto the word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place* ; for unless they did so, and gave particular attention to it, they might either see no meaning at all, or mistake the true one ; the sense oftentimes lying very deep, and the prophecy not carrying its own solution along with it.

But here, because a question might arise, and it might be natural to ask ; why then was the word of prophecy given so obscurely ? why did not the prophets deliver themselves more intelligibly, that the reader might never have been at a stand, or obliged to look for their meaning under the covert of figurative expressions, and dark representations ? Now in answer to this, he tells us, ver. 21. and which at the same time is the reason, why prophecy cannot always explain itself, or unfold its own meaning ; *for*
prophecy

prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved, or rather, spake being moved by the Holy Ghost. The meaning of which was not barely * to tell the *Jews*, that prophecy had not man, but God for its author ; and that every inspired person spake by the particular impulse and direction of the Spirit of God ; for though this was indisputably true, yet it proved nothing in the present case ; and besides, the *Jews*, to a man, believed as much, who held their prophets in the highest veneration, and had no other notion of prophecy, but as the gift of God ; and would not allow any thing, but what came from

* It makes a great difference, whether any thing is affirmed for its own sake, or for the sake of any thing that is to be inferred from it : as when St. Paul tells *Timothy*, 2 Epistle iii. 16. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* ; the thing he means there to inculcate, is not so much the divine inspiration of the books of the Old Testament, as the profitable use that was to be made of them, confessing them to be such : accordingly Dr. Hammond, in his marginal reading upon that place, renders the words, Θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος being inspired by God is also profitable ; and some versions leave out the copulative particle, καὶ, as if it was to be translated, all writings that are of divine inspiration are profitable, &c. And so here, after St. Peter had confirmed his own testimony by the word of prophecy, and stiled this latter βεβαιότερον, he would never after that, have formally gone about to prove the divine origin of that prophetic word, which of course was to be supposed, to make his own argument of any

from him, to deserve that name : but his meaning is, that the prophets of old did not prophesy when, and as often, and as much, as they pleased ; but only at such times, and in such manner and proportion, as God pleased, which is the very thing the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* says, *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1. In a word, that the spirit was not subject to the prophets, but the prophets wholly under the power and influence of the spirit. And hence it came to pass, that not only the hearers, to whom the prophets spake, frequently did not understand

any validity. : and if he had done it, it would neither have proved prophecy to be of its own interpretation, nor disproved it ; for notwithstanding the divine original of prophecy, both parts of this proposition are true, that prophecies sometimes do, and sometimes do not, carry their own explication in them. The only reason therefore, why he could make any mention here of the original of prophecy, was in order to what was to be inferred from it, *viz.* that as prophecy had not its rise from, or never *came by the will of man*, but *holy men of God spake as they were moved*, or carried, *by the Holy Ghost* ; so, for that reason they were necessarily confined to the dictates of the Holy Ghost, and could go no farther, either as to matter, or manner, or any other circumstance attending prophecy, than he would give them leave : and this contains a sufficient answer to any cavil that might be made to the obscurity of some prophecies ; and accounts for their not being perfectly understood, till interpreted by the event ; even because the Holy Spirit intended it so.

the

the import of the vision or prophecy sent to them, as *Ezek. xx. 49.* *Then said I, Ab Lord God, they say of me, doth he not speak parables?* but what is still more, even the prophets themselves sometimes had not the interpretation of their own prophecies vouchsafed to them; as *Dan. xii. 8, 9.* *And I heard, but I understood not; then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed, till the time of the end.* And if this was the case, then is here a sufficient reason of what was said at the 20th verse, that *all prophecy of the scripture is not of its own interpretation*; even because God for wise reasons, was pleased to restrain it; to limit it to what was necessary for raising the attention, and keeping up the faith and hope of good men in their expectations of the Messias, and serving other ends of Divine Providence in administering the affairs of the church; and not to indulge a vain curiosity, and grant men a wanton exercise of the prophetic gift: the inference from which was, that they ought to be contented with such degrees of light and knowledge (though no more than that *of a light shining in a dark place*) as God thought fit to communicate unto them, and to wait for the fuller evidence from prophecy, 'till the completion of the event: though as to the event in question, enough had been revealed already by the prophets

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phets of old ; and, as the crisis drew nearer, confirmed by Christ and his apostles, to preserve the faithful converts, to whom St. *Peter* addressed this epistle, from being seduced by scoffers, and to satisfy any that would give themselves the trouble to attend to it, that he and the other apostles had *not followed cunningly-devised fables, when they made known to them the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

F I N I S.



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